My Introduction
to N. Frye
at Norris
lecture

Mr. Chancellor
Mr. Principal
Mr. Chairman
Ladies & Gentlemen

Within the past five years every important literary journal on both sides of the Atlantic has commented frequently and at length on the significance of a book called the Anatomy of Criticism pub'd in 1957. This book has already made literary history and will continue to be a challenge to the ~~international~~ literary world for some time to come, since it is the bravest attempt so far to make order out of the chaos of contemporary literary theory.

Its author, Dr. Northrop Frye, had already acquired an international reputation, as early as 1947, for his brilliant study of William Blake, entitled Fearful Symmetry. Yet these

two fine books are only the highlights of his literary career. He is more than a scholar and a critic. He is a man of letters in the broadest and best sense of that term. In the years between 1947 and the present, Dr. Frye has edited at least six books, contributed essays or chapters to another dozen books, and written, to date, more than 80 articles and reviews for learned journals. In addition to this, he was Editor of the Can Forum for 6 years, and for 10 years he wrote the annual critical survey of Canadian Poetry for the Letters in Canada series in the U of T. Quarterly. At present he has 3 books in press and 4 others in active preparation. all his work is marked by (over)

by erudition, critical acumen, and style. His wit, his feeling for language, the rhythm of his sentences and the originality and brilliance of his analogies are as welcome ~~and~~ as they are rare in scholarly ~~writing~~ work.

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One would think that all this writing might have kept Dr Frye busy enough. Yet, in addition, he has pursued an academic career. Having been graduated from Victoria College in 1933, he completed the Theological course in Emmanuel College and was ordained in the United Church of Canada in 1936. He went to Merton College, Oxford and received his masters degree in English in 1940.

He had chosen Univ. teaching as a career was lecturing at Victoria College, in the English Dept. as early as 1939. By 1952 he was Professor and Chairman of the Department. In 1959 he was made Principal of Victoria College, a position which he still holds.

And somehow he has found time also for an active career as public lecturer and visiting professor. In this

capacity he has lectured from Boston to Seattle and from Winnipeg to Texas. He has taught a full term, or a summer session, in Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Indiana, Washington and British Columbia. He has made several Television appearances and, on radio, he has recently concluded a series of talks called the Massey lectures.

He has been a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada since 1951 and in 1958 received the Royal Society's Lorne Pierce Medal for distinguished contribution to Canadian literature. He is also a member of the English Institute of which he was chairman in 1953, and was a member of the Executive Council of the Modern Languages Association of America

from 1958 to 1962. He is ~~currently~~ also chairman of the Governor-General's Literary Awards Committee.

He received the degree of LL D from Carleton University in 1957 and from Queens in 1962; the degree of D & D. from United College Winnipeg in 1958; and the degree of Doctor of Litt. from the University of New Brunswick in 1960 and from Mount Allison in 1962.

The most amazing fact about all this is that Northrop Frye still lives and works in Canada. His roots are Canadian — he was born in Sherbrooke, Quebec in 1912. He went to school in Moncton, N.B. And though he travels a lot, his home and his academic life are centred in Toronto.

Canada has produced a creditable number of brilliant scholars. But most frequently, when they gain world acclaim, they are lost to us. Not only do they lose interest in matters Canadian; most often they literally leave Canada and become immersed in another country and another culture. At best, they make occasional visits, just long enough to tell us how backward, provincial and dull they think we are.

So, to find a talented intellectual at home in Canada, to find an internationally-acclaimed man of letters firmly rooted in our academic life, interested in our literature, intimately sharing in our search for cultural identity, is a refreshing

and hopeful sign.

Dr. Frye's influence is already apparent in Canadian letters. He is, as a teacher, the fountain head of a new school of talented young poets and ~~critics~~. As a critic and reviewer, he has taught us to value ~~excellence our talented writers~~ our Canadian writers for their ~~talents~~ excellence rather than for their Canadianism. Yet, while insisting on excellence, he has pointed out to us the essentially Canadian qualities of such varied talents as those of E. J. Pratt, Earle Birney, Irving Layton and James Reaney.

~~What is it that is essentially Canadian~~

What is it that is "essentially Canadian"? We are not sure, certainly, but Northrop Frye believes that if ~~you~~ we encourage the best in our artists and poets, they will tell us —

they will give us ~~what~~ we are looking for — a distinctive face and a voice of our own. ~~And~~ to ~~this end, to the proper Evaluation and encouragement~~ of our artists and poets so that ~~they may mirror for us an~~ image ~~we may~~ ourselves ~~that we~~ may be proud of, we ~~must bend to the task of education~~ ~~educating a nation, of molding a culture to love excellence~~, and ~~reward it above all else.~~

In his Introduction to the Collected Works of E. J. Pratt, Dr. Frye says, of this country —

"In defiance of every geographical and economic law, Canada has made itself not simply a nation

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but an environment. It is only now emerging from its beginning as a shambling, awkward, absurd country, groping and thrusting its way through incredible distances into the west and the north, plundered by profiteers, interrupted by European wars, divided by language, and bedevilled by climate, yet slowly and inexorably bringing a culture to life."

If that culture is ever to be born it will due, in no small way, to the expert ~~critical~~ midwifery of critics, educators and men of letters.

Such is Northrop Frye.